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ABSTRACT

This study assessed differences in attitudes toward bilingualism within and between two groups of monolingual and bilingual adolescents in two neighboring regions, Slovene Istra and the coastal area of Italy. Participants were 227 monolingual and bilingual secondary school students who provided demographic information and completed a scale that measured attitudes toward bilingualism. The scale included sentences reflecting both positive and negative attitudes toward bilingualism. Items that reflected integrative attitudes toward bilingualism were those in which there was a tendency toward linguistic and/or national affiliation, interpersonal communication, and individual development. Items reflecting instrumental functions of bilingualism were those that showed a utilitarian urge to be bilingual. Sample items included the following: bilinguals fear contact with monolinguals, and to be bilingual is to have greater opportunity to become successful. Multivariate analysis of variance highlighted statistically significant differences in the attitudes of monolingual versus bilingual students. Both monolingual and bilingual students tended to depend on "in-group" and "out-group" judgments, and they both tended to linguistically "stay put." When integrative attitudes were compared, there were differences only between linguistically diverse adolescents in coastal Slovenia, while differences in instrumental attitudes were found between all analyzed samples. (SM)

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Bilingualism through the eyes of monolinguals and bilinguals. Attitudes of adolescents from Slovenia and Italy

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Marina Furlan

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Abstract

Anyone could agree that in con' nporary societies multiculturalism and multilingualism are common phenomena. Nowadays almost anyone living in urbanized areas has some experience with other languages, bilingualism and people with cultural background different from his own.

The aim of this very study was the assessment of differences in attitudes towards bilingualism held by monolingual and bilingual adolescents from two neighboring regions.

Tested subjects were 277 students attending last grades of secondary schools in the Slovene Istra and in the neighboring coastal area of Italy. Subjects were chosen in accordance with the requirements of our independent variables: mono- and bilingualism and Slovenian/Italian environment, while attendance to the same type of secondary school was the control condition. All subjects responded to an introductory questionnaire and were tested by means of a Scale of attitudes towards bilingualism.

Results of statistical analyses indicate the existence of some statistically significant differences in attitudes towards bilingualism. When integrative attitudes are compared, differences between linguistically diverse adolescents are present only in the coastal region of Slovenia, while, on the other hand, differences in instrumental attitudes are to be found between all analyzed samples. Statistical analyses were carried out for each type of attitudes (integrative and instrumental), results confirming the existence of a relationship between "lingualism" and instrumental attitudes in Italy and between "lingualism" and integrative attitudes in Slovenia.

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Introduction

Anyone could agree that in contemporary societies multiculturalism and multilingualism as well as biculturalism and bilingualism are common phenomena. Nowadays almost anyone living in urbanized areas has daily contacts (professional, private etc.) with people, whose mother tongue is different from his own and whose behavior and traditions have a different background than his own. And we can say even more: thanks to the mass-media and to the long distance communication facilities (phones, mobile phones, the www etc.) even people living in strictly monocultural and monolingual areas have the opportunity to get in touch with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds on a regular basis. At this point we can start discussing two different aspects of the problem we've just introduced. On one hand we see that even by not living in a multicultural environment people get in touch with different cultures and languages, which means they "interact" with them, get an impression of them and come to form opinions and attitudes towards them and it is even more so, when interactions are held on a regular and on a face to face basis. On the other hand interacting with people from a different cultural and linguistic background means also that one has to have at least one language in common with them – let it be the language of one of the persons in interaction or a so called "lingua franca". It is obvious that in both cases the better is the knowledge of the common language of interacting persons, the higher is the quality of their communication and the least the number of language-based misunderstandings. We can therefore get to the conclusion that bilingual individuals can take advantage from bilingualism just for the simple fact they can communicate efficiently in more than one language and, thus, interact directly with a wider range of people.

At this point we must briefly leave our main topic just to make a consideration about bilingualism in general. What is bilingualism? When are we to talk about bilingualism and when, on the contrary, just about one mother tongue and a more or less good knowledge of a second, foreign language? It is important to underline that there are almost as many definitions of bilingualism as there are authors studying the phenomenon. Some among them point out that it is enough to master one language and to be able to utter a few words or phrases in an second one to be considered bilingual, while others pretend a person to have a high level mastery of both languages to let her/him be considered bilingual. The point of view of each author depends partly on her/his scientific background and partly on the object of her/his interest. Being myself a psychologist, the definition of bilingualism I start from is one

that is considered to be mainly psychological (and psycholinguistic) (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). According to it, a person can be considered bilingual if she/he has either:

- Started to learn both languages from birth on OR
- Started to acquire two languages in different periods of his/her early childhood with both of them having been acquired in informal situations - that is not in institutionalized settings.

After this digression, needed to point out the way we look at bilingualism, let us go back to the red thread of our introduction.

Apart from the question of a better or worse knowledge of the others' language, living, working or simply communicating with linguistically or culturally diverse people can, under particular circumstances, lead to problems not easy to be solved. In some cases this may be due to some basic cultural differences such as *religious differences* difficult (but not impossible!) to overcome, differences in *value priorities*, major *lifestyle differences* etc. But on the other hand problems in intercultural communication and interaction may also derive from a much more basic reason: ignorance. Ignorance about the others' values, way of living, way of thinking, intentions, knowledge, abilities and skills and, more generally: about their culture. It is exactly by ignoring most characteristics of a group or community that people easily become prejudiced towards it. As Reber (Reber, 1985: 566) points out, the meaning of the term "prejudice" is in fact defined as "a forming of an attitude prior to having sufficient information, a preconception" that can be, generally speaking, either positive or negative, although, related to attitudes, it has a much more specific meaning: "a negative attitude toward a particular group of persons based on negative traits assumed to be uniformly displayed by all members of that group" (Reber, 1985: 566). On the other hand Rokeach (in: Hayes, 1998: 414) defines attitudes as: "A learned orientation or disposition ...which provides a tendency to respond favorably or unfavorably to the object or situation." If we fuse the quoted definitions and apply them to interpersonal situations, we end up defining prejudice (towards a group or an individual as a member of a group) as a form of negative (unfavorably) attitude deriving from ignorance that can have a negative impact on relations between people from different groups.

Sometimes the simple fact of being categorized into a group may cause people perceive others in a distorted or, at least, less favorable way. This phenomenon is often referred to as the "in-group/out-group bias". People tend to favor their own group and to be less favorable to those from a different group. Such characteristic becomes even more evident,

when reinforced by prejudice and/or negative attitudes, which is very often the case when groups of people with different linguistic and/or cultural background are talked about.

In this paper we talk about attitudes towards bilingualism, but to introduce properly our arguments, we still need to do one more digression. As we know that people can be/become bilingual for different reasons, we have to consider that such different reasons may have an influence on the consequences people will have if they do not become bilingual at all or if they don't become bilingual up to the expected extent. Let's take for example a couple that wants a child to be bilingual for the sake of having a better education, wider horizons etc. The child enrolls in a foreign-language school, but than fails to become bilingual - parents will probably be unsatisfied and maybe angry, but his failure will probably not have any severe consequence. It is the case of the so-called "elite bilingualism", typical for members of well-off social classes. But let's take a different example: the case of a child from a linguistic minority. In the environment, where she/he lives, her/his mother tongue (first language or L1) retains the status of a minority language. In order to be able to "function" in the wider environment (spare time clubs, maybe even school, later on: employment opportunities, marriage etc.) such a child has necessarily to become bilingual, which means that he/she has necessarily to learn the language of the wider environment (second language or L2) and, thus, become bilingual (although later on he/she may switch to monolingualism in L2). If he/she fails to acquire a proper knowledge of L2, consequences may be tough to cope with. As Skutnabb-Kangas points out (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981), such a child may feel unadapted not just because by non being proficient in L2 he/she may have difficulties to cope with the demands of the wider environment, but also because in many circumstances being a member of a minority means to be a member of an underprivileged and prejudiced community. For people with such a background even being bilingual may not always be considered a sign of privilege, but rather a sign of marginalisation.

If we now apply what we've been talking about "elite" bilingualism and "non-elite" bilingualism to the case of our subjects from Slovene Istra, we can say that for subjects that do not consider themselves as part of the Italian minority, but are nonetheless bilingual (in accordance with our definition of bilingualism) and attend the Slovene language medium school, where Italian is taught as L2, bilingualism is to be considered as a sort of "elitarian" bilingualism, since what for them is L2, is not the only language that enables them to function in the wider environment. The failure in acquiring a good knowledge of L2 does not have serious consequences for their daily life. On the other hand, when we speak about tested subjects from Slovene Istra, whose' mother tongue is Italian, the acquisition of L2 (Slovene

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language in their case) is of crucial importance for their future, since an insufficient level of knowledge of L2 may lead to the restriction of the number social, economic and geographical environments, where they can function, which means it can lead to social exclusion, restricted job opportunities etc. A similar logic is applicable to subjects from Italy, whose' L1 is Slovene, but since in the area, where they live, one-way bilingualism is the rule, in their case the failure in acquiring Italian as L2 may lead to even more serious consequences than the ones discussed for their Italian speaking peers from Slovenia. All that may affect attitudes of adolescent subjects towards bilingualism.

Problem

The aim of the study was to assess the existence of any differences in attitudes towards bilingualism held by monolingual and bilingual adolescents within and between two neighboring regions: Italian Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovene Istra.

Participants

Tested subjects were 277 adolescents of both sexes, aged between 17 and 19. At the time of testing they were last-graders at 8 schools: 3 majority schools (2 in Italy: 1 in Gorizia and 1 in Trieste, and 1 in Slovenia: Slovene Istra) and 5 minority schools following the maintenance model schooling program (3 in Italy: 1 in Trieste and 2 in Gorizia, and 2 in Slovene Istra) as shown in Table A.

Table A: Distribution of subjects in schools

SCHOOL	*MONOLINGUAL*	*BILINGUAL*	TOTAL	COUNTRY	TEACHING LANGUAGE
Gimnazija Koper[1]	35	82	117	Slovenia	Slovene (+It)
G.R.Carli & A.Sema[2]		28	28	Slovenia	Italian (+Slo)

[1] Although a majority school, the Gimnazija Koper is particular for being placed in an officially bilingual area, where even at "majority schools" the "second language of the environment" (Italian") is taught on a regular basis.

[2] G. R. Carli and A. Sema are two maintenance program schools of the same typology situated not far from each other. Since the number of last-graders was very low, we decided to put pupils from both schools into one single sample group: "Carli & Sema« and to consider them as one single school.

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G. Oberdan	46		46	Italy (Trieste)	Italian
F. Prešeren		29	29	Italy (Trieste)	Slovene (+ It)
S. Gregorcic & P. Trubar[3]		20	20	Italy(Gorizia)	Slovene (+ It)
Duca degli Abbruzzi	37		37	Italy(Gorizia)	Italian
Total	118	159	277		

Measuring instruments

Subjects were tested by means of:

- An introductory questionnaire that permitted us to get basic demographic data about subjects AND
- A Scale of attitudes towards bilingualism.

The latter has been constructed by the authoress of the present study for the needs of a major research work (Cronbach's alfa = 0,82). It is a five-point Likert-type scale comprising 20 items divided among two factors of attitudes towards bilingualism: integrative (9 items) and instrumental (11 items). The content of approximately half items is expressed by means of positive sentences, while the remaining half is expressed by means of sentences that seem to reflect a negative attitude toward the object of measurement (bilingualism). When calculating scores, the scores of the latter have to be reversed in order to get the same »direction« of meaning for both groups of items.

Items that reflect integrative attitudes towards bilingualism are those, in which a tendency toward linguistic and/or national affiliation, interpersonal communication, individual development and toward others (for the sake of socialisation) can be found. On the other hand attitudes, in which instrumental functions of bilingualism are to be traced, are those that reflect a utilitarian urge for being bilingual, f.e. for the sake of getting a better job or position in society, of being more open to diversity etc.

Let us quote one example of each type of item:

»Bilinguals fear contacts with monolinguals.« (negative form, integrative attitude)

»To be bilingual is to have greater opportunities of becoming succesfull.« (positive form, instrumental attitude)

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[3] S. Gregorcic and P. Trubar are two maintenance program schools of similar typology, both situated in the same building. Since the number of tested last-graders was very low, we decided to put pupils from both schools into one sample group: "S. Gregorcic & P. Trubar" and to consider them as one single school..

For the purpose of statistical analyses factorial scores instead of raw scores were used.

Results

Multivariate analyses of variance

Table 1: Results of MANOVA test for differences between factors of attitudes toward bilingualism with respect to the subjects' "lingualism" in *Slovene Istra*

Wilks' λ	R	df1	df2	Significance
0,8838	4,4265	4	278	,0017*

* statistically significant difference between groups ($p<0.05$)

Table 2: Results of MANOVA test for differences between factors of attitudes toward bilingualism with respect to the subjects' "lingualism" in *Trieste*

Wilks' λ	R	df1	df2	Significance
0,8405	6,737	2	71	,0021*

* statistically significant difference between groups ($p<0.05$)

Table 3: Results of MANOVA test for differences between factors of attitudes toward bilingualism with respect to the subjects' "lingualism" in *Gorizia*

Wilks' λ	R	df1	df2	Significance
0,7798	7,6236	2	54	,0012*

* statistically significant difference between groups ($p<0.05$)

ANOVA and t-tests

In the following tables (from 4 to 6) the number »1« in the column entitled »lingualism« stands for »monolingual/s«, while the number »2« stands for »bilingual/s«.

Table 4: Difference in attitudes towards bilingualism held by monolingual and bilingual participants from *Slovene Istra*, grouped by school and by »lingualism« (monolinguals from Gimnazija Koper (1GKP), bilinguals from Gimnazija Koper (2GKP) and bilinguals from P. Sema & G. R.Carli (2 S&C)

Type of	»Lingualism»	Mean	Significance

attitudes	and schools		
integrative	1 GKP	-0,1310	,0270*
	2 GKP	0,2775	
	2 S & C	0,3062	
instrumental	1 GKP	-0,3325	,0891+
	2 GKP	0,1582	
	2 S & C	0,0933	

* statistically significant difference between groups ($p<0.05$)
+ tendency toward statistically significant difference between groups ($0.1>p>0.05$)

Table 5: Difference in attitudes towards bilingualism held by monolingual and bilingual participants from *Trieste*

Type of attitudes	»Lingualism »	Mean	Significance
integrative	1	-0,1752	,7042
	2	-0,2864	
instrumental	1	-0,3183	,0002*"
	2	0,5265	

* statistically significant difference between groups ($p<0.05$)
+ tendency toward statistically significant difference between groups ($0.1>p>0.05$)
" non-homogeneous variances, corrected t-test

Table 6: Difference in attitudes towards bilingualism held by monolingual and bilingual participants from *Gorizia*

Type of attitudes	»Lingualism »	Mean	Significance
integrative	1	0,1494	,4807"
	2	0,3429	
instrumental	1	-0,1715	,0002*
	2	0,6413	

* statistically significant difference between groups ($p<0.05$)
+ tendency toward statistically significant difference between groups ($0.1>p>0.05$)
" non-homogeneous variances, corrected t-test

Discussion

Multivariate analyses of variance show there are statistically significant differences between attitudes towards bilingualism when subjects are grouped according to their "lingualism " (mono- or bi- lingualism respectively) in all observed environments. That means that in all observed areas (Slovene Istra and Italian cities of Gorizia and Trieste) attitudes towards bilingualism held by monolinguals and those held by bilinguals differ significantly from each other, thus meaning that for what concernes attitudes towards bilingualism being monolingual or being bilingual makes the difference.

Such a result is not unexpected, if we consider that measured attitudes towards bilingualism have to do with the perceived *interpersonal* benefits/damage (integrative attitudes) and with the perceived "pragmatic" or, better, *material* benefits/damage (instrumental attitudes) one can derive from being bilingual. Obviously the perception of mentioned benefits depends on the point of view or, better, on social representations of the observer as member of a group and on his perception of his own needs and of the needs of her/his group as opposed to the needs of other groups. As in this case we are dealing with monolingual and bilingual groups of adolescents, where monolingual adolescents are members of a national/cultural majority, while bilingual adolescents are mostly members of a national/cultural minority, we can expect to find different social representations underlying the adolescents' attitudes towards bilingualism. If we consider the relatedness of social representations and prejudice and, again, the relatedness of the latter and attitudes towards bilingualism, we see that the seemingly simple results of our research reflect, in fact, a rather complicated pattern of intergroup relations.

But let's have a look at the remaining 3 tables. Here we see more details that can help us understand where differences come from. The first thing we can notice, starting from an overlook of all 3 tables, is that results found in Slovene Istra basically differ from those found in Italy (Trieste and Gorizia). In Slovene Istra, where the sample group is divided into three groups: monolinguals from the Gimnazija Koper (1GKP), bilinguals from the same school (2GKP) and bilinguals from the maintenance program school (2 S & C), we've namely found a statistically significant difference between integrative attitudes of adolescents with a different linguistic background, while there were no differences between their instrumental attitudes. On the other hand results from Trieste and Gorizia indicate a situation that is exactly opposed to the one just described (no differences on integrative attitudes, but existence of differences on instrumental attitudes). How to explain these findings? The area of Slovene Istra is officialy recognized (by Slovene government) as a "two-way" bilingual area (an area

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with two "languages of the environment"), which means that learning both languages (Italian and Slovene) is compulsory for school children of any national and linguistic background. So the latter (or, actually, their parents) can choose to attend a majority school, where Slovene is the language of teaching and Italian the "second language of the environment" (L2 in a sort of "elitarian" way), or they can choose to attend a maintenance-program minority school (and they can do so even if they are not members of the minority community), where the teaching language is Italian, while Slovene is considered as the "second language of the environment". In neighboring Italy the situation is different. Italian schools from Trieste and Gorizia offer L1 and L2 only to pupils attending Slovene medium schools, while on schools, where Italian is the medium of teaching, L2 is not offered.

From Table 4 we see that the group from Slovene Istra that has the least positive attitude toward integrative functions of bilingualism is the group of monolingual adolescents (from the Slovene language medium school), while results of bilingual adolescents either from the same school or from the minority school show just a slight difference. It seems that the fact that many monolinguals find it difficult to have to learn two languages (their own mother tongue and the so called "second language of the environment") plus a foreign language, is reflected in a low mean on integrative attitudes towards bilingualism. On the other hand they even don't see any reason for learning Italian – just for the sake of communicating with peers (interpersonal function of bilingualism), since all their peers with Italian national and/or linguistic background (belonging to the Italian minority) can speak Slovene.

It is interesting that the way bilinguals perceive the situation is different - they already *are* bilingual and they seem to highly appreciate the integrative functions of bilingualism. Results seem to indicate that both groups (monolinguals on one side and bilinguals on the other one) are rather dependent on "in-group" - "out-group" judgments and they both tend to linguistically "stay where they are". According to Gardner and Lambert (1959; in: Baker, 1992) it may mean that bilinguals from Slovene Istra will preserve their bilingualism, while monolinguals from the same environment will never properly learn Italian. Higher scores on integrative attitudes reflect namely a tendency to affiliate with the group of bilinguals, while low scores reflect the absence of it. On the other hand we can also say that although in Slovene Istra both languages (Slovenian and Italian) have the same officially recognized status, some prejudice against bilingualism may still be present among monolingual adolescents which, by denying any positive consequences of the integrative (but instrumental, too) functions of bilingualism (negative attitudes of the integrative type may also mean that

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subjects think bilingualism has a negative impact on personal development), show a certain tendency to remain prejudiced towards bilingualism and its effects, which is reflected by their search for coherence with their own unwillingness to become bilingual.

Let us have a look at tables 5 and 6. Here we can see that in both Italian cities (Trieste and Gorizia) we find a similar situation for what concerns both types of attitudes towards bilingualism. Integrative attitudes do not reflect any significant difference between monolingual and bilingual adolescents, while in the case of instrumental attitudes differences are found.

So we can say that the situation in Slovene Istra is different from the one in neighboring Italy, where bilingualism is not officially recognized (or, actually, it has become recognized lately, but the law is not effective yet). That means that (in Italy) members of the Slovene minority have to be bilingual (one-way bilingualism) in order to be able to function in their daily life beyond the boundaries of their community, while most members of the Italian majority are monolingual. Slovenes in Italy have to be bilingual, if they want to get more opportunities in life: a better job, a better social position, more social power, in order to be more open towards people from other cultures etc. On the other hand their Italian majority peers (monolinguals) don't feel the need to learn Slovene and to be bilingual themselves. It is obvious they don't need Slovene language for the same purpose as Slovene adolescents do, but they still could appreciate the instrumental function of bilingualism from the point of view of personal and societal openness – if only being bilingual would be considered as socially desirable and thus as an indicator of a better social position. Why isn't it so? Mainly because of prejudice. Monolingual adolescents from Italy have "inherited" prejudice against the Slovene minority from parents and relatives that experienced the period of Fascism, from historically distorted post-WWII events, from slogans of nationalist political parties that were and still are very active in this nationally mixed part of Italy, thus still believing in some slogans and negative consequences of being Slovene. Considering the fact that at a certain point of the past three decades economic circumstances in Trieste and Gorizia started to get worse (and they partly still are), there was a need to find a scapegoat. Such a scapegoat has been found in the Slovenian minority and in the supposed consequences of bilingualism. So we can say that in Trieste and Gorizia the background of the monolingual adolescents' negative attitudes towards bilingualism stems mostly from the assimilation of those aspects of "social knowledge" that considers bilingualism as the reason for unfavorable economic circumstances.

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Let us consider the integrative function of bilingualism in Italy, too! In both samples (from Trieste and from Gorizia) results have shown no significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals, although some differences do exist: bilinguals from Trieste value integrative functions of bilingualism even more unfavorably than monolinguals do, while in Gorizia the situation is reversed. These tendencies reflect the development of a much higher degree of prejudice in Trieste than in Gorizia, which can be explained in the following way: while on one hand after WWII inhabitants of Trieste became less open to external influences and in a certain sense even phobic of loosing their identity if getting in too close a relation with other cultures, as for example with the Slovene culture, Gorizia is a town that after being halved by Italy and former Yugoslavia (after WWII) still remained more open-minded toward the "others" and more willing to get in touch with others (including its "crossborder" cohabitants) than Trieste. So we can say that although there aren't significant differences in integrative attitudes among monolinguals and bilinguals in each of the considered towns, differences on this factor emerge between the two towns. Adolescents from Trieste are basically unfavorable to integrative functions of bilingualism, while their peers from Gorizia are basically favourable to integrative functions of bilingualism.

Conclusions

To conclude we can say that generally bilinguals' attitudes towards bilingualism are more positive than monolinguals' ones. Such result can be explained from the standpoint of the social identity theory (in-groups versus out-groups) and from the point of view of the utility of bilingualism - especially for members of the minority group - where bilingualism is unilateral (one- way bilingualism) as it is in the considered Italian towns. An exception is represented by integrative attitudes held by bilinguals from Trieste (more negative than those held by monolinguals from the same town), where a more profound investigation should show, if, while responding, bilingual subjects from Trieste were holding in mind the fact that their Italian peers were anyway monolingual and thus, "integratively" speaking, there was no use of being bilingual for the sake of communicating with them.

On the other hand, when comparing results from Slovenia to those from Italy, we see that although in Slovene Istra results for instrumental attitudes do not show statistically significant differences between compared groups, they are still similar in that monolinguals' attitudes are negative, while bilinguals' are positive. From this standpoint we can say that

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there is a similarity between tendencies in both countries, thus meaning that the officially recognized bilingualism in Slovene Istra doesn't have a decisive impact on instrumental attitudes of adolescents and that to be bilingual doesn't really represent an "instrumental advantage" for bilinguals or, at least, is not experienced by them as such. On the other hand results for integrative attitudes differ from area to area. Monolinguals from Trieste and Slovene Istra hold negative attitudes toward integrative functions of bilingualism, while integrative attitudes of their monolingual peers from Gorizia are positive (although less positive than the bilinguals' ones). And again - integrative attitudes of bilinguals are positive in Slovene Istra as they are in Gorizia, while they aren't in Trieste – as already discussed above.

How to change the situation in order to promote different aspects of bilingualism in all studied areas? A creation of more jobs requiring the knowledge of both languages in all should lead to more positive instrumental attitudes towards bilingualism among monolinguals, while a more "people oriented" promotion of bilingualism is to be done for the sake of promoting integrative benefits of bilingualism.

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